Lahore Zoo to stay open for visitors at night from next month

By Shoaib Ahmed

LAHORE: Lahorites will be offered a thrilling experience at the Lahore Zoo as its doors will be open for visitors at night too from the next month, and they will also be entertained with live music performances and puppet shows on weekends.

Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department Director General Mobeen Elahi told Dawn on Sunday that Lahore Zoo was going to introduce night zoo visits, most probably from February.

He said certain sections of the zoo will be opened for the visitors at night, including lion enclosures, Reptile House, fish aquariumand Hologram Zoo. During the night hours, ambiance lighting will be illuminating the food court, lake, trees and the hill located inside the zoo, he added.

He said the children visiting the night zoo will also be entertained by puppet shows.

Mr Elahi said the zoo food court would be revamped and later outsourced to some international food chain, while bids from local food vendors have also been invited through a tendering process. He said the night zoo will remain open to visitors till 9pm, except Saturdays and Sundays, when the entry ticket will be costlier as puppet shows and live music performances will be held on weekends.

To a question about the night zoo activities' impact on the zoo animals, as they might be stressed because of the noise and lighting, Mr Elahi said that keeping this in view, only certain sections of the zoo housing nocturnal animals would be opened after dark.

To another question about the affordability of zoo visit for the public, given the introduction of tickets of varying amounts for different facilities, the director general said that the entry fee was just Rs100, and visitors could roam the entire zoo by paying this amount.

He said the night zoo ticket prices, especially for weekends, is yet to be determined by the wildlife department.

Currently, besides the Rs100 per person entry fee, different facilities such as hologram zoo, reptile house and fish aquarium have additional tickets.

Sources say that the concept of the night zoo has been taken from Singapore zoo.

JI Lahore ready for referendum against LG Act

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The local chapter of the Jamaat-e-Islami has completed all preparations to hold a public referendum against the Local Government Act 2025 in the provincial capital to obtain direct public opinion on the local government system.

The referendum will be held from Jan 15 to 18.

Addressing a meeting of party officials regarding the referendum preparations, JI Lahore Emir Zia-ud-Din Ansari Advocate said that the preparation of ballot boxes had been completed and a large number of ballot boxes were ready for use.

He added that three-member committees had been constituted to ensure effective, organised, and transparent management of the polling process.

He further announced that polling stations and camps would be set up at major intersections and public squares across Lahore during the referendum period. Mr Ansari said that through this public referendum, direct public opinion on the local government system would be obtained, and citizens would be formally involved in the process of amending the Local Government Act.

He said the JI would use public pressure to compel the government to abolish provisions of the Act that were against public interest.

LAHORE: A large number of people throng Landa Bazaar near Dehli Gate to buy warm clothes. — White Star

Punjab set to launch construction of 37,000 houses

41 govt-owned sites identified across province for the WB-funded hybrid project

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The Punjab government is set to launch a major project of constructing 37,000 housing units for the people in next couple of months, as the preparatory work has been accelerated in this regard.

The project titled "Punjab Affordable Housing Programme (PAHP)"-- a World Bank-funded hybrid housing scheme worth USD 250 million over five years, has been designed to strengthen housing institutions and significantly enhance the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Punjab.

"The PAHP targets delivery of 37,000 housing units, of which 20,000 units will be constructed on state land using World Bank financing, while the remaining units will be delivered through private sector engagement, ensuring a blended and sustainable delivery model," says an internal report presented to the Punjab government.

The project implementation is being carried out through a structured institutional arrangement by Urban Unit and the Punjab Housing & Town Planning Agency (PH&TPA) via the Programme Management & Implementation Unit (PMIU). To ensure implementation readiness, 41 state-owned sites across Punjab have been identified with the help of land record and revenue authorities.

Comprehensive field verification has been completed whereas district administrations have also been taken on board as required under the World Bank protocols for establishing a strong foundation for phased execution.

The report further states that in a bid to raise the depleting water table, the government, in principle, has decided to construct as many as 1,000 groundwater recharge wells across the province this year.

The construction of wells will be initiated by the Water and Sanitation Agencies (WASAs) in all districts. The initiative introduces modern engineering solutions to address declining groundwater tables caused by urbanisation and excessive extraction.

The programme has already been initiated in Lahore as a pilot project and is planned for expansion across all districts under a phased manner, ensuring province-wide impact. In Lahore, three recharge wells have already been made functional and more than 15 locations would soon have more wells.

The report states that the Parks and Horticulture Authorities (PHAs) in several districts have been assigned the task to lower greenbelts—a smart engineering approach to address urban flooding challenges associated with conventional greenbelt designs. In Lahore, the work has been kicked off formally.

"Traditionally, the elevated greenbelts along roads and highways have unintentionally contributed to waterlogging during heavy rainfall, as excessive height restricts natural drainage and causes rainwater to accumulate on road surfaces. Recognising this challenge, the government has shifted towards scientifically designed greenbelts that support effective storm water management," the report explains, adding that all new greenbelts developed across Punjab will be constructed at optimised, lower levels, in accordance with international best practices, to facilitate natural water flow and reduce urban flooding risks. "This approach ensures that environmental objectives are achieved without compromising existing infrastructure or causing avoidable disruption."

It says that the work on Lungs of Lahore & Ring Road Forestation project--a pioneering, environment-friendly initiative aimed at combating smog, improving air quality, and promoting sustainable urban development has been accelerated, as it reflects a proactive and science-based response to Lahore's long-standing environmental challenges.

The project envisages the creation of a forest-like green boundary around Lahore through large-scale ring forestation, establishing a natural environmental buffer against air pollution and unchecked urban sprawl.

"This project is designed to serve as a permanent ecological asset for the city, positioning Lahore among global cities adopting nature-based solutions for environmental resilience," the report reads. The project is also planned to be replicated by the PHAs in other districts.

It further states that Punjab's flagship housing initiative, Apni Chhat Apna Ghar (ACAG), has achieved a major milestone with the completion of over 50,000 homes in 2025, marking a significant step toward addressing Punjab's long-standing housing deficit for low-income families. The programme provides zero-interest, zero-fee housing loans, reflecting a strong commitment to affordability and financial inclusion. It has demonstrated social outreach, with widows, persons with disabilities, and minority community families among direct beneficiaries.

It mentioned that the Apni Zameen Apna Ghar (AZAG) programme has also been launched to secure land ownership for landless families. The digital-first approach enabled as many as 367,000 people to apply online across Punjab. The programme entered its implementation phase with first-digital balloting of 2,000 free residential plots across 19 districts including Kasur, Faisalabad, Attock, Sargodha, Jhelum, Gujrat, Mandi Bahauddin Chiniot, Jhang, Okara, Bhakkar, Khushab, Layyah, Vehari, Lodhran, Sahiwal, Rajanpur, Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar.

Questions over removal of nine teaching hospitals' heads in a short span

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: The Punjab government has removed the medical superintendents (MSs) of nine teaching hospitals on multiple charges during a short period of last two weeks, reportedly triggering an administrative turmoil at the major health facilities of the province.

Those removed included Children's Hospital & Institute of Child Health Multan MS Dr Kamran Asif, Gujranwala Teaching Hospital MS Dr Attique Ahmad, Sahiwal Teaching Hospital MS Dr Zulfiqar Hyder, Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi MS Dr Ejaz Ahmed Butt, Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan MS Dr Faisal Waheed, Gujranwala Medical College Teaching Hospital MS Dr Nayyar Imran Haider, Allama Iqbal Teaching Hospital DG Khan MS Dr Shahid Hussain Magsi.

The Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Teaching Hospital, Gujrat MS was placed under suspension under PEEDA Act 2006 on account of inefficiency and misconduct.

Most notifications issued by the department to remove the MSs claimed they were 'transferred on administrative grounds.But sources said the action was initiated following a series of surprise inspections carried out by the Chief Minister's Inspection Team (CMIT) that, in its report to the chief minister, alleged that the medics were incompetent and negligent and some of them were involved in 'financial irregularities'. In some cases, the CMIT claimed that the MSs had failed to ensure supply of essential medicines to the patients who had to purchase them from pharmacies.

On the other hand, an official, close to the information, says the abrupt transfers of so many heads of hospitals have led to the administrative turmoil in the major teaching institutes of Punjab. According to him, the search committee was constituted by the Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education (SHC&ME) Department on the directives of the CM on March 29, 2025 to look for suitable officers to head the public hospitals.

Chaired by Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, the committee comprised Adviser to the Chief Minister retired Maj Gen Dr Azhar Kayani, the then special secretary (Operations) SHC&ME Department (now retired), King Edward Medical University (KEMU) Vice Chancellor Prof Mahmood Ayyaz, former Director General Health Dr Zahid Pervez, and the chief executive officer of the Punjab Healthcare Commission. The committee interviewed several candidates and forwarded recommendations to the CM. Following CM's approval, postings were made in mid-May.The official says that the subsequent removal of several appointees within a short span raised fundamental questions regarding the reliability of the selection process itself.

Some senior officials within the health department, privy to internal deliberations, assert that such sweeping and abrupt transfers have instilled fear and uncertainty within hospital administrations, potentially undermining institutional efficiency rather than enhancing governance. They argue that repeated reshuffling within months reflects lack of confidence in the very search committee that recommended these officers. They have also strongly censured the government's approach, describing it as 'symptomatic treatment' rather than addressing the systemic governance failures. They emphasize that chronically overburdened healthcare institutions cannot deliver optimal outcomes amid constraints of financial and human resources.

The experts urge the government to extend targeted relief to low and middle-income populations through health cards issued on the basis of comprehensive socioeconomic surveys, warning that administrative interventions devoid of structural reforms will remain counterproductive.

They advocate for a rationalised referral mechanism and equitable geographical distribution of patient admissions rather than targeting the senior administrative staff.

LITERARY NOTES

New book makes Urdu prosody simple

By Rauf Parekh

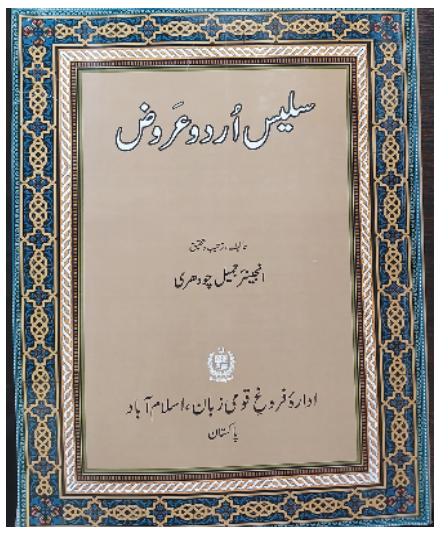
MUST a poet know *ilm-i-arooz* or prosody? Some poets say no and argue that prosodic metres teach us to measure the poetic rhythms and patterns of sounds as they occur in a poetic line, but prosodic harmony is something poets are born with and, therefore, they do not need to learn it. Some even quote the apocryphal Persian couplet that says "I compose poetry with sugar and candy, I do not know *faaelaatun faaelaat* (an allusion to '*taqt'ee*', or prosodic scansion).

But the prosodic harmony of a metre (*behr*) is governed by several principles that are based on the innate linguistic rhythms of a language, including the syllabic stress and accentual peculiarities. Unless one knows those intricate phonetic patterns that create a distinct metre, one is likely to err. Secondly, a metre is not a mere collection of melodious sounds, rather the rhythms of a peculiar metre show a certain mood and tempo, which are suitable for a particular topic or genre.

As Urdu prosody is based on Arabic prosody and Arabic prosody recommends using a specific metre for a specific topic or particular sentiments, Urdu prosody, too, favours some particular metres for some special occasions or moods. For instance, majority of Urdu *marsias*, or elegies, are in two distinct metres as they have lamenting tone and the very theme of elegy may be felt from their modulations.

Also, Arabic war songs and marching verses, recited on the occasion of a battle, were composed in *behr-ei-rajaz*. Rajaz literally means perturbation and haste, writes Najmul Ghani Rampuri in his *Behrul Fasaahat*, since this metre's pitch conveys a sense of commotion and quickness, truly reflecting a war's mood. Without understanding these delicate aspects of prosody, poets cannot convey effectively what they say in their verses. So, learning prosody may not be a must for a poet, but it certainly increases the understanding of finer aspects of poetry and gives an edge over those who do not know prosody.

But students of Urdu literature have been alienated from prosody these days, says Jameel Chaudhry in the preface to his book titled *Salees Urdu Arooz*, or easy Urdu prosody. One of the reasons for this alienation is that most of the books written on prosody in Urdu use a language full of jargons and technical terms. Some of these books, such as *Behrul Fasaahat*, are in an outdated language, says Chaudhry. As the title suggests, he has used a simple and plain language in the book wherever possible. Another problem is that authors of books on prosody have blindly followed the older books, notably *Hadaaequl Balaaghat* and *Qavaaedul Arooz*. Though scholarly and useful, these books do not cover certain aspects, such as Hindi metres, and Urdu books are usually devoid of these aspects, adds Jameel Chaudhry.



The author has amply covered the aspects that are often ignored in books written on the topic, for instance, Urdu alphabet, consonants and vowels in Urdu, vowels that are allowed to be dropped from pronunciation for the sake of metric requirements, quiescent letters not reckoned in scansion, history of prosody, rules governing scansion, details of *zihafaat* (catalexis or the changes made to a foot or *rukn* of a metre), and certain words with two different pronunciations used in poetry, for example *ummeed* and *umeed* (hope), which makes the prosodic stress to shift and new comers often stumble on such words rendering a verse out of metre. Some charts included in the book showing the metres with each foot and its catalectic form, explaining a syllable omitted as per rules, are very helpful.

The book offers both phonetic and prosodic analysis of the couplets referred to for explaining the scansion. What is commendable is that unlike old books that copy the couplets from older books for scansion, the author has quoted new and fresh verses from modern poets which shows his hard work and a vast reading. What seems strange, however, is the fact that Jameel Chuadhry, the author, has reproduced a large number of his own couplets for explaining and scansion. Another aspect that deserves praise is that the book refrains from repeating old mantras and introduces some new techniques for explaining prosody and scansion. The author also advocates abolishing altogether some meters from Urdu as they are either hardly ever, or never, used in Urdu poetry.

This useful, 400-page, large-sized book has just been published by Idara-i-Farogh-i-Qaumi Zaban (IFQZ), Islamabad. In his intro Dr Saleem Mazhar, IFQZ's director general, informs the readers that Jameel Chaudhry is an engineer by profession but is a poet and has deep interest in prosody.